



FALL/WINTER 2015

EN POINTE



40 YEARS OF FABULOUS!

That's how I would explain the existence of Cuyahoga Valley Youth Ballet and now Ballet Excel Ohio. We are blessed to have such a unique experience for our dancers and community with this wonderful dance company started by "Miss Nan". Creating works of original art, unique to any youth program in the country. In this 2015-2016 season we continue the tradition with our annual Gala event on October 9th. Our exciting collaboration with Akron Symphony performing in their "Holiday Pops", December 11, 2015 at E.J. Thomas Hall. Followed by our world premier of "Pinocchio" choreographed by Erich Yetter, and our anniversary ballet "Four Decades of Dance: A Tribute to Nan Klinger" choreographed by Tom Gold, March 5 & 6, 2016 at the beautiful Akron Civic Theatre. We round out our year in collaboration with the professional dance company Groundworks and Akron Symphony Orchestra in the ballet "Carmina Burana" choreographed by the artistic director David Shimotakahara on May 7, 2016 at E.J. Thomas Hall.

"Pinocchio" is based on the history of Akron. Many people don't realize Akron was one of the largest toy manufacturers in the world during WWII. Its fast and furious choreography has been fun yet challenging for the dancers. The magical costumes and lively music will bring smiles to the faces of all who see it.

"Four Decades of Dance: A Tribute to Nan Klinger" is a touching story of how Miss Nan came up with the idea to have a youth ballet company and watches pieces of ballets throughout the 40 years. Those of you

who knew her, will be sure to feel the incredible journey she took us on during our years of dance in the company. Alumni will be asked to join the current dancers on stage for an incredible and joyous finale. (Yes you read that right, you are going on stage!)

Mark your calendars for a fun filled weekend On March 5th and 6th as we are planning events for alumni and parents during this 40th Anniversary. If you are not receiving our emails please go to our website at balletexcelohio.org and click on "Keep up to date!"

We are fortunate to be able to continue the vision of our Founding Artistic Director, Nan Klinger, and through your generous gifts and continued support we are able to keep this dream alive. Please consider donating this year to our Nan Klinger Creative Fund, which allows us to continue creating new ballets. I hope that after reading about our upcoming season, you will be as excited as we are. I am looking forward to seeing you at one of our many performances that I guarantee will leave you with a smile!

Sincerely,

Mia Klinger



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

As another year comes to a close, it is cause for celebration and reflection in our personal lives and at Ballet Excel Ohio. This past year has been filled with many exciting events and we have only just begun in our 40th season.

For four decades, Ballet Excel Ohio, formerly Cuyahoga Valley Youth Ballet has been delighting audiences with performances and providing exceptional ballet training to local children.

Dancers and choreographers are hard at work getting ready to perform Pinocchio and a special production of "Four Decades of Dance: A Tribute to Nan Klingler."

Thankfully, many members have stepped up and contributed to the success of our company and I want to take this opportunity to personally thank everyone who contributed their time to make our annual Gala the best ever! Ballet Excel Ohio could not survive without each and every one of you contributing and participating in our organization in some way, shape or form.

We are looking forward to this December where some of our dancers have the privilege to be in collaboration with the Akron Symphony Orchestra for their "Holiday Pops" concert.

Lastly, I hope to see all of you at the premier of "Pinocchio" at the Civic Theatre in Akron on March 5 & 6th. I encourage alumni to join us that weekend and help continue with the 40th anniversary celebration. Know that you are an important part of our history!

Thank you for the opportunity to serve as your Board President. If there is anything you would like to chat about, just send me an e-mail or call. I look forward to hearing from you! (president@balletexcelohio.org or 216.509.3500)

Best regards,

Sara Blankenship
President of the Board

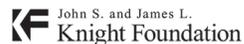


CALENDAR OF EVENTS

November 28	Holiday Tree Festival, John S. Knight Center
December 9	Christmas Tea at St. Sebastian Parish Zwisler Hall, Akron
December 11	Holiday Pops collaboration with Akron Symphony Orchestra – Nutcracker Variations, EJ Thomas Hall
December 12	Holiday Pops collaboration with Akron Symphony Orchestra – Nutcracker Variations, Medina
January 26	In-school performance, Dover
March 5 & 6	Civic Performance: Pinocchio and Four Decades of Dance: A Tribute to Nan Klingler, Civic Theatre
May 7	Collaboration with Akron Symphony and Groundworks
June 1	Akron Galleries Reception
June 9	#artpartyakron Art Auction

OUR FUNDING

Thank you to these incredible organizations that make Ballet Excel Ohio, and its outreach programs, accessible to the youth of our community.



Seniors Gwen Waters and Diane Castle



2015-2016 Ballet Excel Ohio Dancers



Alumni News

With Ballet Excel Ohio celebrating its Ruby Anniversary comes the opportunity to consider the ways that being a part of such a successful pre-professional youth ballet company shapes our young dancers into productive and dynamic adults... No matter what path they choose to take after leaving our studio. Although some of our company members go on to achieve great things in the performing arts, many more of our young dancers go out into the world and succeed in other amazing ways!

MRS. JILL SHANKAR, ESQ.



Mrs. Jill Shankar, Esq. (nee Awender) is a wonderful example of a ballet Alum that chose to utilize what she learned while studying dance to pursue other opportunities. Ballet Excel Ohio had the opportunity recently to catch up with Jill to learn more about what she has been accomplishing since leaving the ballet company more than 30 years ago.

Jill had the pleasure of obtaining her ballet training with Ballet Excel Ohio's founder, the late Miss Nan Klinger at age 10 when she was accepted into the then-Cuyahoga Valley Youth Ballet (CVYB) as an Apprentice. Jill shared fond memories of attending dance classes and rehearsals in Miss Nan's very first studio, which was located in the basement of a building that housed a Lawson's convenient store. Jill recalled going to Lawson's between classes to purchase lemonade when rehearsals were held on particularly hot and steamy days. Similar to our current dancers, Jill's favorite memories were of applying make-up and preparing to perform while backstage at the Akron Civic Theatre. During her years with the company, Jill performed in productions of the Nutcracker, Little Ida's Flowers, and the Enchanted Toy Shop.

Currently, Jill has her own law firm in the Shaker Heights area (Law Office of Jill E. Shankar), and she specializes in legal research and writing, which means she spends a great deal of time investigating case law and drafting Court documents. Recently, her writing expertise was recognized by The Ohio Association for Justice, as they published an article that Jill wrote within their October, 2015 issue.

When asked what she learned from her years of dance that shaped her into the person she is today, Jill replied, "I learned ritual, discipline, and an appreciation for structure... which I apply to all aspects of life as an adult." Jill indicated that while training with the CVYB, she learned to relish the "hard work and discipline" that Miss Nan expected from all of her dancers.

Undeniably, Jill's appreciation for diligence and perseverance continued after she left the CVYB to further her education. Jill graduated from Sarah Lawrence College in 1988. She then obtained an MBA from Case Western Reserve - Weatherhead School of Management in 1992. While attending law school, Jill was the 2008 recipient of the Honorable Mention in the Selma Moidel writing competition sponsored by the National Association of Women Lawyers for a paper she wrote about mandatory HPV Vaccines. Jill graduated cum laude from Cleveland-Marshall College of Law in 2009. She was then admitted to the Ohio Bar in November of that same year.

When asked what advice she would offer our current company dancers, Jill remarked,

**"Embrace the rigor that ballet offers,
along with the lessons in self-control
and the benefits that working hard provide."**

With regards to the dancers that do not have aspirations to be professional performers, Jill said, "Find something you can fall in love with... there's something out there for you, even if it's not ballet."

~ Special thanks to Carrie Schnirring for interviewing Jill and writing this article.



Noelle Boyages

is dancing her senior year on scholarship as a Trainee for BalletMet in Columbus, Ohio. She is taking academic classes at Columbus State Community College through College Credit Plus program and online through Hudson High School. She will be dancing in this season's Nutcracker, as well as other company performances in the 2015-2016 season.



Ballet
Met



CALLING ALL ALUMNI!

We are currently planning festivities for the 40th anniversary and would love to see you there! Make sure you are on our mailing list to receive your invitation.

Email Kate (Lieberth) Lytton
contact@balletexcelohio.org



In Memoriam
Melissa F. Meighen

We'd like to remember alumni Melissa (Missy) Meighen who passed away in September of 2013. Missy danced with Cuyahoga Valley Youth Ballet until her graduation in 1983.

Melissa maintained a career-long dedication to social justice and a personal passion to create positive change for kids and their families. She was creative and energetic, always ready with quick wit and a winning smile.

Loving and kind in all her ways, upright and just to the end of her days. Sincere and true, in her heart and mind, beautiful memories she left behind.

Yes! I want to donate to Ballet Excel Ohio!

Ballet Excel Ohio couldn't exist without the generous donations that go to help with costume alterations, design and construction, choreographer stipends and performance and outreach expenses.

So while you are sipping some holiday eggnog, please consider a donation to warm the hearts of your favorite pre-professional dance company.

Please visit our website www.balletexcelohio.org and click "Support" to donate online or mail your check to Ballet Excel Ohio, P.O. Box 3131, Cuyahoga Falls, OH 44223

Thank you for your support and Happy Holidays!



PINOCCHIO

MARCH 5 & 6, 2016
AKRON CIVIC THEATRE

CHOREOGRAPHED BY ERICH YETTER



Artistic Director Mia Klinger
P.O. Box 3131
Cuyahoga Falls, OH 44223
balletexcelohio.org

4TH ANNUAL RUBY GALA SAW RED SUCCESS!

Thank you to all that participated in this wonderful night!

Our Ruby Gala was a fun filled affair celebrating Ballet Excel Ohio's 40th Ruby Anniversary. It was a recorded breaking year in both attendance & money raised with over 125 people raising over \$21,000 to support the ballet company's mission.

Attendees, in their red attire, guests enjoyed a magical evening of cocktails, games, silent and live auctions as well as dinner and dancing.

The dancers that performed for the large crowd were Jade Blankenship, Megan Linnen, Evelyn Willet and Emma Oplinger.

The centerpieces were ruby-jeweled pointe shoes on each dinner table with a special party favor for each guest as a thank you for supporting.

After dinner and live auction, guests enjoyed the evening to dance and mingle with their friends and BXO supporters.

